

Ambassador Morningstar's Statement on Recent Protests in Azerbaijan

We have seen reports of public unrest in the Azerbaijani town of Ismayilli on January 24, resulting in injuries and destruction of property, including the burning of a private hotel and the local executive's private house. Police subsequently dispersed a January 26 demonstration in Baku called in sympathy with Ismayilli residents, and several dozen protesters were detained. Two other protests took place earlier this month in or near Baku against perceived abuses by the authorities—one by shopkeepers protesting rent increases, and another by citizens protesting non-combat deaths in the military. In some instances, it was reported that authorities used tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse participants.

We regret the violence in Ismayilli. At the same time, we encourage meaningful dialogue between the Azerbaijani government and its citizens to address legitimate grievances and also encourage authorities to respect citizens' freedom of assembly and expression.

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